Conscience

Its Use and Abuse

THOMAS BAIRD

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CONSCIENCE

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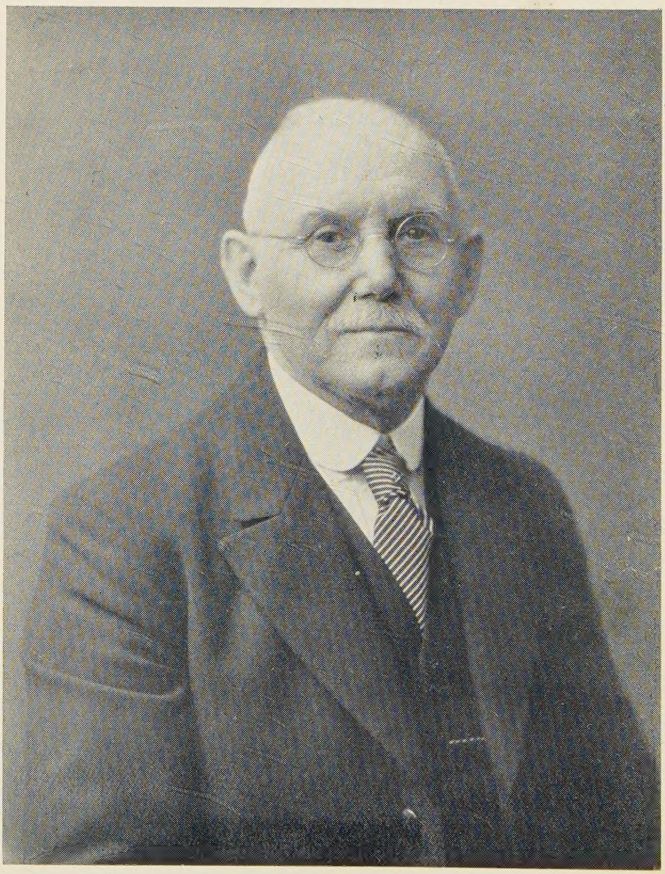

THOMAS BAIRD

CONSCIENCE

BY

THOMAS BAIRD

FORMERLY OF SINGAPORE

LATTERLY OF CANADA AND U.S.A.

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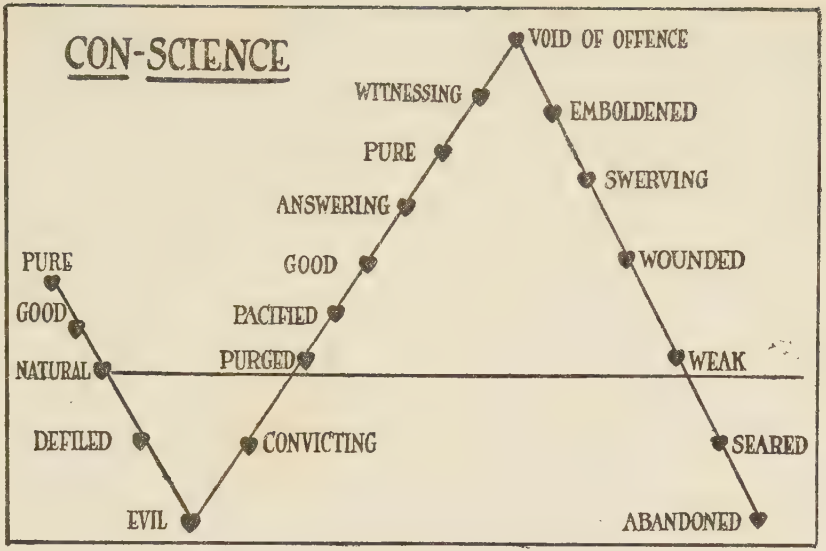

Mr. Baird's Chart on Conscience.

FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION

THE contents of this book were delivered to large and appreciative audiences in five daily talks during a recent week in the *Fulton Street Noon Prayer Meeting.*

It affords me much personal gratification that they are now issued in this form, and I would only desire for the *readers* the same great blessing which came to those that *listened* to these instructive messages. The subject is a compelling one, greatly needed to be heard in these days of loose thinking. Mr. Baird honours God's Word in his dependence upon it. His arrangement of its passages offers but another instance and evidence that the Bible has all the truth we need to know on any given spiritual theme.

The Holy Scriptures are an inexhaustible mine extending correlatively under the surface of every human need, and contiguously with all time. Mr. Baird as a prospector has sunk another shaft.

Here is gold—enter !

DR. GEORGE H. DOWKONTT, M.D.
Superintendent, Fulton Street
Noon Prayer Meeting,
New York City, N.Y.

January 1914.

FIRST DEDICATION

I MOST humbly dedicate this unpretentious volume, first, to my Heavenly Father; and, secondly, to every member of the heavenly family upon the earth.

Here you will find no attempted display of literary excellence; but plain, simple, humble, wholesome fare. John Baptist was a good man, albeit he appeared in "raiment of camel's hair and leathern girdle;" and a book may be a good book although its message be not woven with the fine silk threads of cultured phraseology, but tersely expressed in the homespun language of everyday speech.

SECOND FOREWORD

SINCE the issue of the First Edition of *Conscience*, I have been privileged to peruse a wonderful volume entitled, *Unexplored Remainders in Conscience*, by Joseph Cook of Boston, U.S.A. He might also have added a sub-title and designated it, *The Unheeded Reminders of Conscience*. This book was published in 1878.

In that book he lays Conscience bare in all its motives, moods and manifestations. In fact, had I seen his book *first* I never would have written mine. My only apology for enlarging and improving my Book is that Mr. Cook writes for *philosophers* and *theologians*, while I make my humble appeal to ordinary *saints* and lowly *sinners*. I append a few of his weighty words as examples of his keen perceptions and terse expressions.

"When we are about to form an *intention*, Conscience looks forward and perceives its *character*; when we form it, Conscience points out its *nature* as good or bad, and after we have *executed* it, Conscience does the same. Conscience is thus, *antecedent*, *concurrent* and *subsequent* in relation to every choice and act."

Conscience may be briefly and provisionally defined as a faculty, including both a *perception* and a *feeling*; a perception of right and wrong in the nature of choices and intentions; and a feeling that right *ought*, and wrong ought *not* to be carried out by the will. Conscience in full activity includes:—

1. A direct *perception* of right and wrong in choices.

Mr. Baird's effort to awaken the Consciences of his fellow-men to a sense of their accountability to God, in the issue of this new and enlarged edition, is both timely and vitally needful. We trust the Lord's people will appreciate the importance of the subject so faithfully dealt with in these pages, and will ensure for this edition a much wider circulation than that accorded to the former one. I wish *Conscience* every success to God's glory.

L. W. G. Alexander.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My hearty thanks is due to R. D. Johnstone, M.A., who very kindly and painstakingly examined and corrected the final proof sheets of this book ere committing it into the Publishers' care. Also to Mr. David Ritchie for encouragement to re-issue this volume, and for the generous terms upon which he agreed to reprint this work.

INTRODUCTORY

MAN is a " fearfully and wonderfully made " being (Psm. cxxxix. 14). That he possesses a tripartite constitution is profoundly true, but that admission does not express the whole truth. God has also very richly endowed him with many other wonderful faculties besides " Spirit," " Soul," and " Body " (1 Thes. v. 24). Man also possesses " Mind " (Matt. xxii. 37), " Memory " (1 Cor. xv. 2), " Will " (John i. 13), and " Conscience " (Romans ii. 15), in addition to the afore-mentioned conditions. These latter faculties are all incorporated with, and may be somewhat subordinate to the first mentioned three, but they are not without their relative importance, and are all equally necessary to man's complete being.

Without wishing to pose before my fellows as a very learned metaphysician, I would here venture to express a difference of function to each of these mysterious faculties, keeping well in remembrance Lord Rosebery's inimitable definition of metaphysics. He very graphically and epigrammatically describes the too critical investigation of metaphysical problems as " Groping for a *black* cat in a *dark* room, where *no* black cat had ever been." The wisdom of the above delightful definition will be appreciated by all. The following attempted classification of faculties with their relative functions is neither arbitrary nor dogmatic, but rather tentative and suggestive.

1. The *Mind* is the *thought-producing* faculty.
2. The *Memory* is the *thought-retaining* faculty.
3. The *Soul* is the *thought-apprehended-in* faculty.
4. The *Spirit* is the *thought analyzing* faculty.
5. The *Heart* is the *thought-appreciating* faculty.
6. The *Conscience* is the *thought-convicting* faculty.
7. The *Will* is the *thought-energizing* faculty.

At first sight the distinction between *Mind* and *Memory* may seem superfluous and without justification, but on closer inspection it will prove not to be so. The difference may be simply stated in one terse sentence. The mind *produces* thought originally, but cannot *retain* it for practical purposes ; the memory retains all that the mind conceives, but could not produce it *originally*.

Even after we have expressed all these suggestive thoughts relating to man's varied faculties, and their corresponding functions, there remains much unsolved and insoluble mystery concerning man's complex constitution. An accredited surgeon well skilled in the science of anatomy may dissect a human body and arrange all its vital parts before his wondering students. He can discourse on man's heart, lungs, liver and kidneys, and explain man's physical constitution with intelligence and precision. Invite him to anatomize man morally and lay open to your vision his spirit, soul, mind, will, memory and conscience, and he will immediately admit that you have set before him an impossible task.

No human being, however highly endowed intellectually, can explain what man's spirit is composed of, nor in what part of the body it resides. We are utterly without reliable knowledge as to the link which binds soul to spirit, and spirit and soul to body. It is still impossible to

state with any degree of accuracy what relationship exists between man's diverse faculties, or what influence they exert upon each other. A very eminent scientist admitted rather regretfully that "life was still wandering through space, an undefined and indefinable thing." Pseudo-scientists make boast that they have discovered the origin and composition of life, and summon to their assistance innumerable Greek phrases to define it. But Professor Armstrong at the last British Medical Association Conference reminded these "Savants" that many of their great swelling words were simply so much high-toned scientific paper used to wrap up their own ignorance.

One very advanced German professor at a previous British Medical Association Conference assured his illustrious audience that life was composed of certain definitely-ascertained chemical compounds. All that now remained to be discovered was the proportionate admixture of these various compounds, and then life could be scientifically and instantaneously produced. What an astounding exhibition of addle-headed arrogance and ignorance combined!

Truly there is no folly so foolish as the foolishness of the wise. If these men state the truth, then we need no longer wait on Nature's slow process of producing life. Order your next kitten from your chemist on your way home from business to-morrow.

"Children of God: leave this world to its mulishness,
Beetles were blind in forests of yore."
Things to their nature and fools to their foolishness,

The Human Soul

1. In origin indescribable.
2. In appearance invisible.
3. In composition unanalyzable.
4. In value incalculable.
5. In constitution indestructible.
6. In exchange impossible.
7. In transmigration unthinkable.

CONSCIENCE MISUNDERSTOOD

FEW things are more misunderstood than the functions of Conscience, it being generally supposed that Conscience is the infallible law, so that if a man is walking according to his Conscience no fault can be found with him. But Conscience to the individual is simply what the *compass* is to a sailor. It can tell him whether his ship is going east, west, north or south, but it cannot tell him which way it ought to go, nor can it reveal to him the hidden rocks and reefs which must at all costs be avoided. This he has to learn from his *chart*, and with an *accurate* chart the compass becomes the most *valuable* thing on the ship, enabling him to reach safely his desired haven. So it is with Conscience. A man may be exceedingly conscientious, and yet be sinning against the Lord, for an *unilluminated* Conscience is one of Satan's most potent weapons, leading, to quote only one example, some African parents to murder their twin children. . . . The Psalmist said, "I have set the Lord always before me." There are we to solve the questions of Conscience, there settle doubtful points, there test all doctrines and practices, however ancient. And we need not fear to enter into the light, for there, within the veil, we prove that His precious blood cleanses from all sin.—J. SOUTHEY.

CONSCIENCE DEFINED

CONSCIENCE is a *compound word composed* of "*Con*" and "*Science.*"

Con-science. Please consult the chart at the beginning of the book.

Our ordinary dictionaries do not convey to us the rich depth of its meaning, neither does our average conception of the word indicate clearly all its hidden virtues. There is a certain elusiveness about the word that makes it attractive to the etymologist. The Welsh people in their stirring language have caught the inner flame and have gripped the real meaning in all its roots, reaches and ramifications.

"*Con*" stands for, in conjunction with, and

"*Science*" indicates knowledge, so that our word, first analyzed and then synthesized, just means knowledge which we hold in conjunction with another, and that other "*no other than God.*"

1. *I have sinned.*
2. *I know that I have sinned.*
3. *God knows that I have sinned.*
4. *I know God knows that I sinned.*
5. *God knows that I know that he knows. This is the true etymological significance of our common word "Conscience."*

And conversely this law works out the same in right as in wrong. A healthy Conscience always approves where right has been chosen and followed instead of wrong, just as surely as it reproves where wrong has been committed.

Conscience is that inner sense of *oughtness* which tells us that certain things *ought to be done*, and that we *ought to do them*. On the other hand, Conscience is that feeling of *ought-not-ness* which clearly indicates that there are certain things that *ought not to be done*, and, therefore, we *ought not to do them*. As someone has convincingly said :— "What has liking or not liking things to do with it at all. If the thing is *right* then I ought to do it *because* it is right, whether I like it or not. And if the thing is wrong, then I ought not to do it, no matter how much I like it, or how frequently I have done it."

CONSCIENCE IN OPERATION

Boley and a Woman

John Boley lived in Wurtemburg, Germany. He had a fine reputation for uprightness and piety. One day, as he sat quietly at home, a strange woman knocked at the door and offered some contraband alcohol for sale. Boley eyed her sternly without uttering a single word. The woman became visibly uneasy under his searching gaze. At length the woman said, "For God's sake, sir, take your eyes off me." Boley still remained silent. "Lord Jesus, help me," groaned the woman, wringing her hands. Boley never removed his eyes from her. "I see, I see," cried the woman almost convulsively, "you know all about me. I will confess, sir. I had one, sir, only one, sir." "Only one?" said Boley still piercing her through with his penetrating eyes. "O Lord, I see you know all about it," said the woman, bursting into tears. "Yes, sir, I have had two illegitimate children, but I did them no harm." "No harm?" said Boley still keeping his eyes sternly fixed upon her. "O God, have mercy upon me," she groaned; "yes, sir, I drowned one of them." "Only one?" said Boley, still more sternly, but now rising to his feet.

The woman fled from his presence like a startled fawn, and he saw her no more.

"Conscience makes cowards of us all."

It is astonishing how soon the whole Conscience begins to unravel, if one single stitch drops. *One* little sin indulged makes a hole you could put your *head* through.

> " One finger's-breadth at hand will mar
> A world of light in Heaven afar ;
> A mote eclipse a glorious star,
> An eyelid hide the sky."

Conscience in a Murderer

"A Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God."

The New York *Times* of 24th July records these facts :—

" Henry Love of Owen Sound, Ontario, was hanged seven years ago for murdering his wife. The chief witness against him was his fourteen-year-old son. Yesterday, 23rd July, that son, now twenty-two years old, confessed that he slew his mother."

Oh, the deadly darkness of the human heart, even the heart of a perverse fourteen-year-old boy! And yet, the account states that the father and mother were deeply religious people. Seven long years that boy maintained the lie that cost his innocent father his life.

But one day a lightning stroke fell on the Conscience of the now twenty-two-year-old man. God's messenger, an evangelist, came to the town where the young man lived and delivered a fearless message concerning the wrath of God upon unconfessed sin—and the man confessed his awful iniquity.

Conscience Money

An unsigned letter came to the offices of the general manager of the Illinois Central Railroad a

few days ago. It contained $30. The money was "Conscience money," fruits of repentance of a former employé whose offence the letter detailed. The letter speaks for itself. It read :—

"Dear Sir,—Inclosed find $20 and ten [10] for interest. I put $20 more in a man's time than he had earned, expecting to get it for myself, but I did not ask him to give it to me, consequently I didn't get it. He is 20 ahead and the I C branch is 20 short. Now I will pay it back as it was my fault. I want to make it good, and hope I'll never be so ignorant and selfish as to do a thing like that again.

"Would like to see it in *Chicago Tribune* of 18th to satisfy me it reached the right source."

Conscience in a Child

Perhaps the quaintest letter in the whole White House collection is one which came from a child to President Cleveland, written in September 1895. This is what it says: "To His Majesty President Cleveland. Dear President: I am in a dreadful state of mind, and I thought I would write and tell you all. About two years ago—as near as I can remember, it is two years—I used two postage stamps that had been used before on letters, perhaps more than two stamps, but I can only remember of doing it twice. I did not realize what I had done until lately. My mind is constantly turned on that subject, and I think of it night and day. Now, dear President, will you please forgive me, and I will promise you I will never do it again. Enclosed find cost of three stamps, and please forgive me, for I was then but thirteen years old, for I am heartily sorry for what I have done. From one of your subjects."

Conscience in Operation

A Guilty Conscience

The Conscience of a guilty man is like the great clock at St. Paul's, in London. At midday, in the roar of business, few hear it ; but when the work of the day is over, and silence reigns, it may be heard for miles. In the whirl of excitement Conscience is not heard, but the time will come when it will sound and bring misery to the soul. Bessus, a native of Greece, being one day seen by his neighbours pulling down birds' nests and destroying their young, was severely reproved for his cruelty. He replied that their notes were to him insufferable, as they never ceased twitting him for the murder of his father. The man that does evil thus makes God's presence in his own bosom an accusing detective.

STARTLING STATEMENTS ON CONSCIENCE

Dr. James Buchanan on Conscience

It cannot, indeed, compel obedience ; but it still speaks to him the language of authority, and imposes an irresistable sense of obligation. The martyr obeys it ; but the murderer feels it too, —the midnight murderer who fears neither God nor man, but for the satisfaction of his revenge, or with a view to plunder, imbrues his hands in a brother's blood, even he, as he steals along the dark, unfrequented road, feels in his inmost soul the stirrings of a power which cannot be quelled, and although he would gladly stifle its voice when it seeks to scare him from his prey, he can only resist, he cannot subdue it. It forewarns him against the guilty deed ; it agitates and accuses him while the deed is being done ; it follows him in his remorseful flight ; it pursues him in the crowded city ; it haunts him in the solitary desert ; it darkens his thoughts as he lies down to sleep ; it mingles with his very dreams ; it smites him even at the festive board, amidst the revelry of companions as daring and desperate as himself ; and all this against his will, by an inherent, unalterable and everlasting law of his nature.

Lady Macbeth on Conscience

Come, you spirits,
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here ;
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full

Of direst cruelty ! Make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse ;
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it ! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief ! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell !
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes.

Alexander M'Laren on Conscience

Our Consciences are apt to have insensitive spots in them, like witch-marks. We often think it enough to remove the grosser evils, and leave the less ; but white ants will eat up a carcass faster than a lion. Putting away Baal is of little use if we keep the calves of Dan and Bethel. Nothing but walking in the law of the Lord " with all the heart " will secure our walking safely. " Unite my heart to fear Thy Name " needs to be our daily prayer.

Victor Hugo on Conscience in Cain

In Victor Hugo's poem on Cain, the poet represents the murderer as fleeing from Eden to escape the eye of God. He went many miles, and lay down to sleep at the foot of a mountain. But as he looked up in the sky, he beheld the awful eye of God looking into his guilty soul. Cain rose in haste, and went to the farthest point of land jutting out into the sea, but lo ! on the rim of the ocean, looking like a rising sun, appeared the haunting eye again. Cain then put a tent over himself, but the thick skins could not keep out that vision. He built a roof of heavy timber, but

the eye shone through. He built a tower of stone and hid in the lowest dungeon, but the glowing eye pierced the stones. Finally, they built a tomb, and buried the haunted man as though he were dead; but in the tomb he found the eye of God still looking at him.

This is an awful picture, but did not the Psalmist have some such thought in his mind when he said: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there; if I make my bed in *sheol*, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, and the light above me shall be night: even the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

John Bunyan on Conscience

One day as I was passing in the field, with some dashes on my Conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, "Thy righteousness is in Heaven," and methought I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say to me He wants my righteousness, for that was just before Him. I also saw that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself.

Jowett on Conscience

Tampering with the label: Sin is transgression. It is the deliberate climbing of the fence. Sin is intention. We sin when we are wide awake. There are teachers abroad who would soften words like these. To alter the label on the bottle does not change the character of its contents. Poison is poison, give it what name you choose. Let us guard against the men whose pockets are filled with deceptive labels. Let us vigilantly resist all teaching which would chloroform our Conscience. Let us call sin by its right name, and let us tolerate no conjuring either with ourselves or others.

Samuel Rutherford on Conscience

Madam, many eyes are upon you, and many would be glad your ladyship should spill a Christian, and mar a good professor. Lord Jesus, mar their godless desires, and keep the Conscience whole without a crack! If there be a hole in it, so that it take in water at a leak, it will with difficulty mend again. It is a dainty, delicate creature, and a rare piece of the workmanship of your Maker, and, therefore, deal gently with it, and keep it entire, that amidst this world's glory your ladyship may learn to entertain Christ.

Thirty Pieces of Silver

(1)

Zech. xi–xii, Ex. xxi–xxiii.

Thirty pieces of silver,
For the Lord of Life they gave;
Thirty pieces of silver,
Only the price of a slave:
But it was the priestly value
Of the Holy One of God;
They weighed it out in the temple,
The price of the Saviour's blood.

(2)

Matt. xxvi, 15.

Thirty pieces of silver
Laid in Iscariot's hand :
Thirty pieces of silver,
And the aid of an armed band,
Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter
Brought the humbled Son of God
At midnight from the garden,
Where His sweat had been like blood.

(3)

Thirty pieces of silver
Burn on the traitor's brain ;
Thirty pieces of silver,
O, it is hellish gain !
" I have sinned, and betrayed the guiltless,"
He cried with a fevered breath,
And he cast them down in the temple,
And rushed to a madman's death.

(4)

Matt. xxvii, 6, 7.

Thirty pieces of silver
Lay in the house of God ;
Thirty pieces of silver,
But O, 'twas the price of blood !
And so for a place to bury
The stranger in, they gave
The price of their own Messiah,
Who lay in a borrowed grave.

(5)

It may not be for silver,
It may not be for gold,
But still by tens of thousands
Is this precious Saviour sold :
Sold for a godless friendship,
Sold for a selfish aim ;
Sold for a fleeting trifle,
Sold for an empty name ;

(6)

Sold in the mart of science,
Sold in the seat of power ;
Sold at the shrine of fortune,
Sold in pleasure's bower.
Sold where the awful bargain
None but God's eye can see ;
Ponder, my soul, the question,
Shall He be sold by thee ?

(7)

Sold ! O God, what a moment !
Stifled is Conscience voice.
Sold ! And a weeping angel,
Records the fatal choice.
Sold ! But the price of the Saviour,
To a living coal shall turn,
With the pangs of remorse forever,
Deep in the soul to burn.

CONSCIENCE ILLUSTRATED

Any accurate knowledge to which we may attain regarding human life and man's incomprehensible composite being must come by way of the Bible. The *same* God is the author of *both*. He first made the Man, and then He made the Book. The Book was written to inform man how, when, where and why he was created, and also to instruct him concerning the nature, character, and personality of his Almighty Creator. This book of God and god of Books not only unfolds *God to man* in all His wonderful attributes and prerogatives, but it also explains *man to himself*. It discriminates and differentiates between his manifold powers, and divinely divides and declares his spiritual, mental and physical proportions. In this treatise, however, we must strictly confine ourselves to the subject of Conscience, and the New Testament references on this point are, happily for us, both numerous and various.

The almost absolute silence of the Old Testament on the subject of Conscience must remain throughout all time an impenetrable mystery. Only once in the whole range of Old Testament revelation is it referred to, and then it is mysteriously relegated to a marginal position. "Curse not the King, no not in thy *thought*" (margin—conscience) (Eccles. x. 20). We speak of the "Age of Conscience" as superseding the "Age of Innocence" in Eden, and antecedent to the "Age of Law." We do so entirely at our own charges.

God never employs such language. We may be right, but we have no scriptural authority. Before proceeding to study together the diagram affixed to this volume, we will first cull a few illustrations from various sources to illuminate this important theme. Though we may not say with absolute accuracy what Conscience *is*, we may discover somewhat of its constitution through its *operations*. Happily for us, the realm of illustration is particularly expansive and prolific, and we may draw gratuitously and plentifully therefrom without dread of being accused of plagiarism.

I. Conscience God's Spy

Conscience has been purposely planted by God in every human breast. It discerns the soul's deepest secrets and intentions, and immediately reports thereon to God. Every conceivable mood and motion of the soul's invisible life is constantly under the espionage of an ever-vigilant Conscience. The faintest impulse of the soul's inner being never escapes its penetrating gaze. This faithful spy never permits the soul out of its sight; no, not for the briefest interval of time. This most searching surveillance proceeds uninterruptedly day and night.

No excessive brilliance of light ever blinds the piercing eye of Conscience. No darkness, however deep and dense, can exclude its awful scrutiny.

1. The soul's *wish* is *known* to Conscience.
2. The soul's *sigh* is *heard* by Conscience.
3. The soul's *thought* is *read* by Conscience.
4. The soul's *feelings* are *felt* by Conscience.
5. The soul's *intents* are *open* to Conscience.
6. The soul's *designs* are *apparent* to Conscience.
7. The soul's *desires* are *revealed* to Conscience.

Day and night, every hour, moment and second, Conscience keeps perpetual vigil over the soul's inner energies and its outward activities through the body.

II. Conscience God's Link

When every other bond which ever bound man to his Almighty Creator was ruthlessly sundered through sin, Conscience still held man to God with a hoop as strong as steel. When man's other spiritual and moral qualities became utterly atrophied by transgression, Conscience still lived and flourished in the midst of this moral devastation. When every visible trace of man's moral resemblance to God had been effectually effaced, the last fragment of his pristine magnificence to remain was Conscience.

Man is now a magnificent moral *ruin*; and the only hope of his ultimate regeneration and restoration to God is to be found in the possession of a Conscience. Oh man, whosoever thou art, I implore thee, cherish Conscience! It is the only avenue of approach God has to the citadel of thy soul. If Conscience be destroyed, the last link that binds thee to God is broken. Thy doom is sealed.

III. Conscience God's Watchdog

Just as a watchdog is stationed conveniently close to his master's house to bark and give warning at the approach of strangers and thieves, so Conscience is God's watchdog, housed in the human heart to bark at the approach of temptation and sin. Happy are the inhabitants of an household who are easily aroused through the barking of a faithful dog, and thus enabled to

drive off all marauders. Much more happy is the soul that permits itself to be truly alarmed by the persistent warnings of a faithful Conscience, and prepared to resist the approaching evil. A *silent* watchdog is worse than *no* dog. A dumb dog is a menace to the safety of life and property. Even so a *silent* Conscience is worse than *no* Conscience. It is a fearful menace to the soul's safety in the hour of its greatest danger.

IV. Conscience God's Bloodhound

Where the *barking* of the watchdog is not heeded, the *howl* of the bloodhound will soon be heard. When the warnings of Conscience are disregarded, then the accusations of Conscience must be endured. The watchdog suddenly and mysteriously becomes transformed into an insatiable bloodhound to scent out the sin of which we were warned, but would persist in committing. Introduce a bloodhound into a scene of bloodshedding, and he will invariably trace out all blood to its very source. Bring Conscience to bear upon sin, however secretly committed and however carefully concealed, and it will soon probe it to its very centre. Bloodhounds are now being extensively employed in all civilized countries for the detection of notable criminals, and superintendents of criminal investigation departments speak in laudatory terms of their efficient work. Conscience is God's bloodhound to discover the soul's most secret sins.

V. Conscience God's Window

Conscience is to the soul what a window is to a house. A house without windows would be a

dingy place, and a soul without a Conscience would be a dark den indeed. The Conscience, therefore, stands in the same relationship to the soul that a window bears to a house. Through the window of Conscience the eye of God penetrates into the soul's most secret and sacred precincts. Through the window of Conscience the eye of the soul may also look out and up into the very face of God. But windows to be useful must be *clean*. Every diligent housewife knows the utility of well-cleaned windows. The *brightness* of the house largely depends upon the *cleanness* of its windows. The eye of the soul cannot see the face of God through the window of a begrimed and besotted Conscience. Keep the window *clean* and God will *see you*. Keep the window *clean* and you will *see God*.

VI. Conscience God's Protest

Every time we sin, whether mentally or materially, Conscience, if healthy, will utter a most solemn protestation against the iniquitous thought or act. A normal Conscience will not suffer one single desire for evil or deed of sin to pass unchallenged or unreproved. It would shirk its very first duty if it did so, and prove itself a traitor to God. When sin is committed anywhere, at any time, Conscience immediately enters a very grave and vigorous protest in the name of God. The language of Conscience on such occasions may be summarized as follows: "I protest against turning the human mind into a seed plot for planting sinful thoughts. I protest against the human body being employed as an instrument for committing sinful deeds." Thus Conscience utters its impressive voice in the temple of the

soul, and the whole moral edifice returns its awful echo. Conscience is a very real *Protestant.*

VII. Conscience God's Lash

Conscience is God's lash for the soul's hide. Which of us, whether old or young, have not frequently and painfully had to endure the lead-tipped tail of the scourge of Conscience? Under every stroke we have ofttimes winced and writhed " with groanings which cannot be uttered." Conscience not infrequently administers its most severe castigations during the silence of night. The lash somehow does not reach us during the day. The soul is so thickly swaddled in the habiliments of the daily activities or pleasures that the whip does not touch us. But night comes, and with the undressing of the body there comes a mysterious undressing of the soul, and then the lash finds its way to the tenderest part of the soul's flesh. Like as an experienced rider plunges his burnished spurs into the reeking flanks of his refractory steed, and sends it bounding forward on its course, so the lash of God has ofttimes whipped us out of the way of sin into the path of rectitude.

VIII. Conscience God's Sword

It has been graciously given to an illiterate Indian convert to Christianity to supply the highest and best definition of Conscience that probably ever has been or ever will be given. A missionary was catechizing a class of inquirers one day on the subject of Conscience. This man defined it as " A little triangular-shaped thing inside the heart. Every time we *sin* it *turns*, and every time it *turns*

it *hurts*." Yea, Conscience may become "one thousand swords" to pierce the soul as many times through and through, as Shakespeare says. I challenge every theological professor in Christendom to produce a truer, briefer, or better definition. Hence we speak of Conscience as God's sword. Every time we sin against God, Conscience turns within, and in turning produces pain. That is exactly what it was created to do. A sword that does not *cut* is *no* sword at all. A conscience that does not prick and puncture the soul has lost its edge and point, and requires God's grindstone to whet its blunted blade. Would to God it hurt us more! We would sin *less* if it cut *more*.

IX. Conscience the Soul's Nerve

The soul has its nervous system as well as the body, and Conscience may be most aptly designated the nerve of the soul. When God wishes to make the soul ache over its manifold misdemeanours, He simply places His holy finger on Conscience.

The soul then immediately begins to quiver and throb under the touch of the Almighty. Almost every kind of toothache is caused by the exposure of the nerve of the tooth to the influence of the atmosphere. There cannot possibly be any pain in an *artificial* tooth, simply because there is no *life* there. The soul without a Conscience is a nerveless mass, and incapable of responding to the touch of God. It was a memorable day in our physical experience when we first felt the throbbings of persistent toothache. Much more painful was it in our spiritual experience when our soul ached for sin, because the great nerve Conscience had been exposed to the touch of the Almighty.

X. Conscience God's Monogram

This thought of Conscience is a peculiarly sweet one. It is the hall-mark of Heaven on the surface of the soul; the *initials* of the eternal on the tablet of the heart; the hand-writing of the Almighty on the soft substance of man's innermost being; the three principal letters of the Triune God interwoven into the warp and weft of man's complex being. It may not be visible to the material eye, but there it is, traced out clearly in the invisible and indelible ink of Heaven.

XI. Conscience God's Fingerprint

The beauty and solemnity of this illustration becomes all the more arresting in view of the prominence given to fingerprints in connection with crime and criminals. Out of the many millions of human beings now inhabiting our great terrestrial ball scarcely two thumbs are quite the same. Acting on this astounding fact the system of fingerprints has been brought into use for the detection of crime. The French Criminal Department were the first to suggest and develop this kind of evidence, and it has proved highly successful. When man transgresses the fingerprint of the Everlasting, God makes its awful impress on the impressionable part of his nature.

XII. Conscience God's Whisper

There is something so suggestive in this presentation of Conscience. It makes the heart "the whispering gallery" of the temple. "*A still small voice*" is often heard whispering down the aisle

of the soul. But great stillness is imperative before we can catch low whispers, and so all the noises of nature must be hushed into absolute quiet if we are to hear the gentle whisperings of a pleading God.

XIII. Conscience God's Thunder

Where the *whisper* is *unheeded* then the *thunder* must be *heard*. When sin has been committed then the thunder of the Eternal comes roaring down the corridors of the being. A whisper reached the ear of Lydia, but it required an earthquake to arouse and arrest the jailer. Conscience can be both *thunder* and *lightning* in the hand of an outraged and offended God. How men flee to cover in a thunder storm! May the thunders of Conscience drive transgressors to the shelter of the Saviour's blood. But remember it is not the *thunder* that *kills*, but the *lightning*.

XIV. Conscience God's Thermometer

Our chart in the opening section of this book was suggested by observing the fluctuations of fever as indicated on a card at the bed-head of every fever-stricken patient. The nurse employs the thermometer constantly to ascertain the advance or the recession of the temperature. *Sin is fever!* The diseases of the body may be properly utilized to symbolize the afflictions of the soul, and Conscience is the thermometer used by the Great Physician to discover how high the fever of sin has ascended in the blood of the soul.

XV. Conscience God's Barometer

Barometers do not create weather conditions; they simply and accurately indicate them. How frequently we have seen men tapping the surface glass which covers the dial of the barometer when they were in doubt as to whether there was to be a change of weather. Conscience is a reliable weather prophet. It can tell, and does tell, in language unambiguous and unmistakable whether a man's future will be "*stormy*" or "*fair.*" How dare any man with a *guilty* life expect a *fair* future? Only in the path of repentance may he!

XVI. Conscience God's Plumbline

Illustrations innumerable spring into existence the moment we commence to contemplate the various offices of Conscience. The plumbline is a most arresting one. By it the bricklayer discovers the accuracy of his building. He dare not trust his *unaided* eye. If he does, the foreman will speedily disillusion him. The plumbline does not *create* the bulge or the sag in the wall, it only *reveals* them; no need for the bricklayer to blame the plumbline, he must blame himself. Conscience is God's plumbline in man's heart to show him his lack of straightness. Man is astray and Conscience tells him so.

XVII. Conscience God's Sundial

The old-fashioned sundial is antiquated to-day, but it served its day and generation. It always registered the time of *day* with amazing accuracy, but it was utterly useless at night. Even *moonlight*

could not convey the proper hour of night. Lamp-light or candle-light were equally delusive and disappointing. Only *in* and *by* sunlight could the numerals that indicate the passing hours be accurately recorded. Conscience is God's sundial, within the soul of man, but only by the *light of God's word* are its findings and showings reliable and serviceable.

XVIII. Conscience God's Alarm Clock

This illustration meets with universal recognition and approbation. Who has not known of or possessed an alarm clock? Its purpose is to arouse the drowsy sleeper out of his heavy slumbers. When first purchased and utilized it is wondrously successful in its efforts to awaken the most unconscious slumberer. But with frequent use its power to arouse is perceptibly lessened, and after a season the sleeper hears its awakening tones no more. And so with God's alarm clock, Conscience. When men begin a course of sin, Conscience rings out with threatening sound; but after a while they stifle the voice of conviction, like the man truly awakened by the alarm clock, who, not wishing to rise, smothers the sound by throwing a garment over the mechanism.

XIX. Conscience the Soul's Palate

I am greatly indebted to Joseph Cook of Boston, U.S.A., for this precious and pungent symbol of Conscience. All his books are worthy of constant perusal. He said, "Conscience is the soul's palate by which we taste the *flavour* of our *intentions*." Now, let this sink in until it saturates and soaks right down into the soft sub-soil of our souls. In

other words, when I decide to do a thing, what is my intention and purpose? Is it *good* or *evil*? The soul's palate will decide. As we know the difference between *sugar* and *salt* when inserted into the mouth, so and as surely may we be able to differentiate and discriminate between bad and good.

XX. Conscience Mercy Rapping at Sin's Door

We will conclude our contemplation of Conscience with this beautiful similitude. After all man's wilfulness and waywardness, testing all his wantonness and wanderings, Conscience is God's yearning mercy knocking at sin's dark, thick door. Oh, reader of these solemn illustrations of the presence of Conscience in your constitution, will you hear the appeals of mercy as they urge you to confess and forsake all known sin, and cast yourself on the boundless bosom of God's immeasurable mercy?

Do it, and do it *now*, and do it *heartily*.

THE NATURAL CONSCIENCE

Romans ii. 15

By this expression we mean Conscience in the natural man. Let us now approach our diagram reverently, and study its variations slowly and carefully. The idea is borrowed from a hospital fever chart. As the thermometer accurately ascertains and indicates the rise or fall of the disease in a fever-stricken patient, so the unerring thermometer of God's word discovers and registers all the fluctuations of Conscience in man with awful precision.

The black line drawn horizontally athwart the entire diagram indicates Conscience in a natural, normal and healthy condition. This faculty is the birthright possession of every human being, and is therefore inherent in all mankind. Every individual person is endowed with Conscience more or less developed according to age and environment, and operating with greater or less intelligence and activity according to knowledge and understanding. Romans ii. 14, 15, furnishes an excellent foundation upon which to build our present structure on Natural Conscience. Please note, it is the *Gentiles* who are under discussion here; and a Gentile is any person who is not actually a Jew by birth. It is first stated that these "have not the law," and yet they are found doing naturally "the things contained in the law."

Then follows the explanation of this astounding

statement : " Which show the work of the law written in their hearts." God has made it His business to write a copy of His immortal, moral code across the heart of every living being. To this law written within every human being, Conscience bears witness, and the thoughts of the mind either *accuse* or *excuse*, according to the health of Conscience at the time. If Conscience is alive and sensitive it will immediately convict man of wrong thoughts and deeds ; but should Conscience happen to be sickly or sluggish it will condone the sin which it would and should otherwise condemn. Therefore we conclude that every heathen person under the sun *knows* or *may know* right from wrong. We will not press this passage beyond this point at present. They may not be able to express their knowledge in technical or even in theological phraseology, but they at least understand the difference between good and evil. They are destitute of the *power* to do the good, but they possess the *knowledge* of the good. When Satan promised Eve that she and her husband would " be as gods knowing good and evil " (Gen. iii. 5) he only told a *half* truth, which is ever the " blackest of lies."

After the fall they certainly knew good and evil as Satan himself affirmed, but they *knew* the good without possessing the *power* to do the good ; and they *knew* the evil without the available strength to *resist* the evil. This is what seems to perplex the apostle in Romans vii. " When I *would* do good, evil is *present* with me." God also enters this solemn complaint against Israel : " They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge " (Jeremiah iv. 22). We may therefore sum up the Natural Conscience briefly as a knowledge of good and evil ; only, let

us remember that "The good that I *would* I do not," and "The evil which I *would not* that I do" (Romans vii. 20). Yes, a sinner under the convictions of law and Conscience may be found doing things he actually *hates* (Romans vii. 15).

One peculiarity about Conscience must be noted here. When it is healthy and virile it will *accuse* the transgressor, but when it is sickly and effeminate it will *excuse* the same sin in the same person.

A DEFILED CONSCIENCE

Titus i. 15

When the natural man begins to tamper with Conscience through sinning against light, that very moment Conscience deteriorates, and begins to decline on the thermometer of experience. Satan's chief purpose in this world has ever been, and now is, to debauch Conscience and thus unfit it for the object God designed it to accomplish. In John Bunyan's imperishable allegory of the "Holy War" we have one of the most masterly portrayals of Conscience in all this vast world's remarkable accumulation of literature. There is nothing like it outside the realm of inspiration.

He conceives the soul of man to be a corporate town called "Mansoul," situated in the Continent of Universe. Diabolus, who had just been deposed from his exalted position for sin, is depicted as ranging through space, searching for an opportunity to be avenged upon God for his punishment. He espies the corporation of "Mansoul," [1] and determines to make an assault thereon. He formulates his plan of attack in conjunction with other vengeful demons, and they approach the town and demand an audience. The inhabitants depute their five responsible elders to interview the besiegers. Their names are as follows: Captain Resistance, Lord Innocence, Lord Will-Be-Will, Lord Understanding,

[1] "The Holy War," by John Bunyan, price 50 cents.

and Mr. Recorder. The latter is Bunyan's inimitable name for Conscience. While the parley is proceeding, a wicked sprite sends an arrow right through the brain of Captain Resistance, and he falls down over the wall, dead. Lord Innocence approaches more closely to ascertain the fate of his colleague, and another foul sprite blows a strong blast of fetid breath into his face, and poisons him to death. Lord Will-Be-Will, observing the trend of matters, suddenly transfers his allegiance from the side of Shaddai to the side of Diabolus. The town now capitulates, and Diabolus and his hordes march boldly in and take possession. Lord Understanding is commanded to retire to his own apartments, and his windows are immediately barricaded. "Having the understanding darkened" (Eph. iv. 18). Four of the ruling elders of the town being thus disposed of, Diabolus now turns his attention to Mr. Recorder. He knows he can never thoroughly *subdue* him, and so he decides to debauch him. By slow and almost imperceptible stages he succeeds in demoralizing Conscience, until he lies prostrate on the floor of his own house, in a state of suspended animation. Diabolus now invites the inhabitants of the town to view the undignified condition of Conscience. He points out to them his inconsistency and incompetency, and mockingly reminds them that Conscience is not a dependable quality. One day he will *reprove* you for sinning, and the next day he will *approve* of your committing the same sin.

Thus Conscience becomes defiled and debauched, and unfitted to perform his divine mission in the town of "Mansoul."

Oh, Conscience! Conscience! man's most faithful friend,
Him thou canst comfort, ease, relieve, defend;
But if he will thy friendly checks forego,
Thou art, oh! woe for me, his deadliest foe!

CRABBE—*Struggles of Conscience.*

AN EVIL CONSCIENCE

Hebrews x. 22

With further advances in sin, the brutalization of Conscience now proceeds with alarming rapidity. All vice is delicately balanced on the edge of a precipice. All sin ever tends downward; only permit sin to commence and it will roll like a stone down a deep declivity, gathering force and velocity as it proceeds. Conscience has now become so desperately defiled as to have become essentially evil. It prefers evil; it delights in evil. It was recorded of antediluvian man that "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, and that continually" (Gen. vi. 5). *All evil* and *always evil*; this most fitly describes the condition of an evil Conscience in post-diluvian man. An evil Conscience repudiates all good and encourages all evil. It hates the good. It avoids good men. It never reads a good book. Nothing is too evil for an evil Conscience. No *blasphemy* is wicked enough to shock it. No *profanity* is too disgusting to listen to. No *sight* is too shameless for its adulterous eyes. No *deed* is too reprehensible for its malicious hand. No *path* is too slimy for its sin-soddened feet. It feeds its evil fire with evil fuel, and constantly emits evil smoke. Here we will introduce four startling statements as being peculiarly apposite to our subject. They are worthy of committing to memory:

"Evil for Good is *Demon-Like.*"

"Evil for Evil is *Beast-Like.*"

"GOOD FOR GOOD IS *Man-Like.*"
"GOOD FOR EVIL IS *God-Like.*"

God did nothing but good to Satan. Satan does nothing but evil to God. Beast does evil to beast, and you can never persuade a horse that it is wrong to kick back at another horse which first kicked it. To give good for good is about the highest altitude to which a man by nature can attain in this present world. Good for evil is God-like, and every Christian who wishes to be like God must learn this lesson well. But the point here is that Conscience, being evil, gives evil *for* evil, and seeks evil *in* evil; and the *more* evil the evil *is*, the more the evil Conscience exults in the evilness of the evil. An evil Conscience wallows in evil. You cannot bring along too much evil for an evil Conscience. This is the deepest dip in the depthless deep of evil Conscience. It can sink no lower. Its deterioration is now complete. Its debauchery is perfect.

Were God not the infinitely merciful Being He is, He might easily abandon man to his awful doom. Man is a self-destroyed being. The steps leading him downward are four, as follows:

1. *Self-Assertion.*
2. *Self-Inflation.*
3. *Self-Direction.*
4. *Self-Destruction.*

As God lingered long over obstinate Ephraim, exclaiming, "O Ephraim, how can I give thee up?" (Hosea xi. 8) so God still lingers patiently over stubborn, perverse humanity.

> O Conscience, into what abyss of fears
> And horrors hast thou driven me, out of which
> I find no way, from deep to deeper plunged.
>
> MILTON—*Paradise Lost.*

A CONVICTING CONSCIENCE

St. John viii. 9

PRAISE be to God for this phase of Conscience. The prodigal begins to stir amidst the swine. The Conscience in sin is like Creation in chaos—all darkness and death. But the Spirit of God begins to brood over Conscience in man, even as He moved on the face of the waters at Creation. Light begins to dawn on the soul's dark past. God has touched the nerve of Conscience at last, and it begins to tremble under His Almighty finger. "They being convicted by their own Conscience" (St. John viii. 9). Innocence is preferable to penitence, but where sin has been committed the next fairest flower in the garden of God to innocency is penitence. Penitence is a lowly plant which grows in the tear-watered plains of contrition. But *conviction* is not *conversion*. It is the *way* to the straight gate, but it is *not* the gate itself. Many persons have gone a long way along the path of penitence but they stop short of conversion, and now their hearts are harder than ever before. They fall *deepest* into hell who fall *backward* into hell. Better far never to have been convicted than, being convicted, not to go forward into conversion.

The late Welsh revival furnishes many instances of this solemn truth. I personally visited the very centre of this spiritual movement, and had pointed out to me men and women who were apparently crushed beneath an overwhelming sense of sin.

Whilst the Holy Spirit was manifestly working, they were terribly troubled; but now they are as little concerned as if the revival had never happened. A very eminent Christian worker, who passed through every phase of the revival, pointed out to me a man on the street and said, "That man was in the chapel lying in a *pool of tears*, but now he lies in the saloon in *pools of drink*." We may well press this point till it is well-driven in. Conviction is *not* conversion. There cannot be a *real* conversion where there was *no real* conviction, but there *may* have been a *real* conviction where there was *no real* conversion. A convicting Conscience, therefore, is the first rung in the ladder, which ascends from the depths of despair and leads to the presence of God. My reader, if you be an impenitent sinner, hasten your repentance, I beseech you. Every day you delay your repentance you have one *more* day to repent *of* and one *less* day to repent *in*. You cannot possibly repent *too soon*, for you know not how soon it will be *too late*. C. H. Spurgeon used to urge his hearers to come to God *for* repentance if they could not come to God *with* repentance. Christ has been exalted to God's right hand to *give* repentance (Acts v. 31). The Goodness of God was designed to lead men to repentance (Rom. ii. 4).

The repentance of one sinner anywhere fills all heaven from centre to circumference with Holy ecstasy (Luke xv. 10).

"So Near" yet "So Far"

Remember, many go far on and reform many things, and can find tears, as Esau did; and suffer hunger for the truth, as Judas did; and wish and desire the end of the righteous, as Balaam did;

and profess fair and fight for the Lord, as Saul did; and desire the saints of God to pray for them, as Pharaoh and Simon Magus did; and prophesy and speak of Christ, as Caiaphas did; and walk softly and mourn for fear of judgments, as Ahab did; and put away gross sins and idolatry, as Jehu did; and hear the Word of God gladly, as Herod did; and yet all these are but like gold in clink and colour, and are watered brass and base metal.—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

When Conscience wakens who can with her strive?
Terrors and troubles from a sick soul drive?
Naught so unpitying as the ire of sin,
The inappeasable Nemesis within.

ABRAHAM COLES—*The Light of the World.*

A PURGED CONSCIENCE

Hebrews ix. 14

SHOULD the soul complete its course of penitence and be led by the Holy Spirit to exercise simple, saving faith in Christ, then the Conscience becomes immediately and perfectly purged (Hebrews ix. 14). This purging implies and includes the entire removal of all sin from the surface of Conscience. Every sin committed leaves a dark stain behind it. All transgression blackens the soul. This one verse contains the whole truth of the Gospel within its brief compass. The three Persons in the Holy Trinity are mentioned here, and all alike are engaged in procuring a satisfactory basis for the purging of Conscience. *God the Father* is represented here as the receiver of an offering that was to make atonement for human sins. *God the Son* is mentioned here as the person who was to offer Himself in death to God to make reparation for our sins.

"Once, *only* once; and *once for all*
The Great Redeemer died."

1. Once for all sin.
2. Once for all men.
3. Once for all time.
4. Once for all righteousness.
5. Once for all eternity.

God the Eternal Spirit is also introduced as the power through whom Christ offered Himself without spot to God. The blood of Christ is declared

to be the *means* through which the Conscience alone is purged. Many preachers seem satisfied to preach Christ as a *martyr for truth* or as an *example* to men. The Bible reveals Christ as a *victim for sin*. There is no salvation in the *fleece* of the lamb. All down through the long, dark ages of sin God has demanded the shedding of Blood by way of atonement. There was blood *in* Eden and blood *outside* Eden. There was blood in Egypt and there was blood in the wilderness. There was blood in the land, and there was blood at the Cross. "Without shedding of Blood there is no remission." That eminent Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans, summoned his relatives and ministerial brethren to his deathbed. Looking around upon them all ere he died, he said, "Brethren, I have never preached without *blood* in the basin." Then beckoning to the death-chariot, and appealing to the driver, he said: "Postillion, drive on." Few modern preachers could make such an announcement as that. Many have their basins filled with *water*, and not a few have them well-stocked with *chaff*. Conscience may fittingly be compared to the bright steel blade of a knife. Should a drop of water fall on it and be immediately removed, the blade will suffer no injury at all. But if it be allowed to remain there for a prolonged period of time, a round ring of red rust will be discovered, which it will be difficult to erase. So with sin on the Conscience; years of continued sin, unconfessed to God, eat like rust into the substance of Conscience, and nothing but the blood of Christ can remove the stain.

John Newton's Confession

In evil long I took delight,
  Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
  And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree
  In agony and blood,
Who fixed His languid eye on me,
  As near His cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
  Can I forget that look ;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
  Though not a word He spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt
  And plunged me in despair ;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
  And helped to nail Him there.

Alas ! I knew not what I did !
  But now my tears were vain :
Where shall my trembling soul be hid ?
  For I the Lord have slain !

A second look He gave, which said,
  " I freely all forgive :
This blood is for thy ransom paid ;
  I die that thou mayst live."

Thus while His death my sin displays
  In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
  It seals my pardon, too.

A PACIFIED CONSCIENCE

Hebrews x. 2

THE pacification of Conscience immediately succeeds the purgation of Conscience. A pacified Conscience is a Conscience completely at rest after the agitations of Conviction have subsided. "Worshippers once purged should have had *no more* Conscience of Sins" (Hebrews x. 2). Please note, it does not say "no more *Consciousness* of sins." The sin of *supposed* sinlessness is *more* sinful than *real* sin. "They who fain would serve Thee best are conscious most of sin within." There is all the difference in the world between a troubled Conscience and a pacified Conscience that there was between the tempest-driven sea of Galilee before the Lord stilled its disturbed elements and after.

In fact, there were *thirteen* storms on that lake on that eventful day. There was the outer hurricane on the surface of the water; and there were twelve inner tempests in twelve human hearts; but, a word from the Son of God, and these thirteen gales were subdued in an instant. After an ordinary storm the sea always requires a reasonable amount of time to recover its equilibrium, but here its pacification was instantaneous and perfect. The *succeeding* calm was greater than the *preceding* storm. Justification by faith is ever followed by peace with God.

"A mind at perfect peace with God,
Oh, what a word is this!
A sinner reconciled through blood,
This, this indeed is peace."

One feels disposed to enlarge upon this heavenly theme, it is so seldom preached from the rostrum and so rarely enjoyed as an experience in the pews. Oh, the unfathomed excellencies of the blood of Christ! The Bible speaks of that blood as *innocent* blood. Surely its *efficacy* to purge the Conscience lies in its *innocency*.

One thought more suggests itself. Not only does this incorruptible blood purge the sinner's Conscience from all the sins of his past life, but it also purges God's *memory* from the recollection of those same sins; so that God can actually say: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews x. 17). There are four "*no mores*" in Hebrews x.:

1. *No more offering for sins required,* v. 18.
2. *No more sacrifice for sin possible,* v. 26.
3. *No more remembrance of sins by God,* v. 17.
4. *No more Conscience of sins by believers,* v. 2.

Blessed be God for the pacification of Conscience!

> "I know myself now; and feel within me
> A peace above all earthly dignities;
> A still and quiet Conscience."

A GOOD CONSCIENCE

1 Peter iii. 16

How could Conscience, after being purged and pacified, be otherwise than good? The contrast to this is found in that fathomless word *evil* which we have already noticed. Good and evil are eternal and irreconcilable opposites. No person can have a good and an evil Conscience in the same breast at the same time. Neither can any person leap from an evil Conscience into a good Conscience at one bound. The path to goodness of Conscience is a process. Contrition is a *process* leading on to the *act* of conversion, and sanctification is *another* process following the act of conversion. Now, it almost seems superfluous to say that a good Conscience is an inestimable blessing. A good Conscience is a good companion, even as an evil Conscience is an evil companion. Six times over have we this desirable condition of Conscience referred to in the New Testament, which fact, I judge, reveals the importance that God attaches to this particular phase (1 Peter iii. 16). Those who possess this heavenly blessing know the value of it; while those who do not, do not as a rule care much for those who do. The High-priest commanded those who stood by to smite Paul on the mouth for asserting that he possessed a good Conscience. This experience was evidently too

advanced even for God's High-priest to attain to.

> " If God and Conscience both approve thy way,
> Be undismayed, let all accuse who may ;
> If God and Conscience doth thy way upbraid,
> Then truly thou hast cause to be afraid."

The Apostle John gives utterance to the same thoughts in other language. " For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God " (1 John iii. 20-21). One very remarkable fact we must not omit to mention while dealing with this point, and that is that the Apostle Paul possessed a good Conscience *before* his Conversion (Acts xxiii. 1). And not only so, but he also affirmed that he actually attained to a pure Conscience while yet he was only a Pharisee (2 Tim. i. 3). This statement seems quite incompatible with the bitter persecuting spirit which he manifested toward the disciples of our Lord, but the explanation of the apparent discrepancy is to be found in our Lord's own words recorded in St. John xvi. 2 : " For the time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service." The apostle thought he was pleasing God when exterminating Christians, so that in the midst of his murderous work his Conscience was apparently good and even pure. Conscience makes a good *goad*, but a bad *guide*.

AN ANSWERING CONSCIENCE

1 Peter iii. 21

THE writer has no intention of commencing a controversy on the subject of baptism, but this sacred ordinance is so closely associated with this phase of Conscience that it would be an act of mean treachery on his part not to allude to it. We never dispute with any person on the subject of baptism. It is far too holy a matter to be degraded to the level of human debate. As all know, our English word "baptism" is an Anglicized form of an untranslated Greek word; and more controversy has been raised over this matter than over almost any other truth in the Bible. In this portion of Scripture baptism is asserted to be "The answer of a good Conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The word answer is *twice* employed in this same chapter. Once it is urged upon every Christian to give an answer to every man who asketh him a reason for the hope that is within him. Please note it is not the *hope* merely, but a *reason* for the hope. Christianity is not an unreasoned nor an unreasonable religion. We will illustrate this point by introducing three classes of individuals:

1. A hypocrite has a *hope*, but no *reason* for his hope.

2. An atheist has a *reason*, but he has no *hope* for his reason.

3. A Christian has a *reason for his hope* and a *hope for his reason.*

Again, every Christian is urged to give an answer to God.

Now, there are many Christians who are ever alert to give an answer to *man* for the hope that is within them, but many of those same Christians are unaccountably slow to give *God* the answer He waits for. I cannot explain just why God associates baptism with the Conscience here, but I know it is so; and what God thus joins together I dare not put asunder. Ignorance of the *purpose* of a fact is no argument against the *fact* of the fact. Has my reader given God his answer? How much longer will *you* keep *Him* waiting?

As to the *mode* of baptism there need be no discussion here. The good old English word "bury" is twice used in connection with the important ordinance of baptism, and no scholar would risk his reputation by arguing about the exact meaning of that word (Col. ii. 12; Romans vi. 4). Dean Stanley, the greatest authority on ecclesiastical law, thus gives the meaning of baptism:

1. "An Immersion."
2. "A Submersion."
3. "An Emersion."

According to this explanation the person is so completely *immersed* as to be *submerged*; and after submersion he *emerges* from the element in which he was immersed. Thus Conscience gives its answer in the ear of God.

The Bigot's Demand

Believe as I believe—no more, no less;
That I am right and no one else confess;
Feel as I feel, think only as I think;
Eat what I eat, and drink but what I drink.
Look as I look, do always as I do,
Then, only then, I'll fellowship with you.

That I am right, and always right, I know
Because my own convictions tell me so ;
And to be right is simply this—to be
Entirely and in all respects like me.
To deviate one hair's breadth or begin
To question, doubt, or hesitate is sin.

I reverence the Bible—if it be
Translated first and then explained by me ;
By churchly laws and customs I abide,
If they with my opinions coincide ;
All creeds and doctrines I admit divine
Excepting their's who disagree with mine.

Let sink the drowning, if he will not swim
Upon the plank that I push out to him ;
Let starve the hungry, if he will not eat
My kind and quantity of bread and meat ;
Let freeze the naked, if he will not be
Clothed in such garments as are made by me.

'Twere better that the sick should die than live,
Unless they take the medicine that I give ;
'Twere better all should perish than refuse
To be conformed to my peculiar views ;
'Twere better that the world stand still than move
In any other way than I approve.

ANON.

Such is the Bigot's bumptious, baneful creed,
And he himself the offshoot of a breed
Which would not mercy show, but fain expel
All other men to darkest, deepest hell.
What recks he though all else on earth be damned ?
The Bigot's heaven never can be crammed.

A PURE CONSCIENCE

2 Timothy i 3

CONSCIENCE may most appropriately be compared to a beautiful, tender plant. Flowers require careful cultivation, and in the hands of a competent horticulturist they are capable of great advance, both in grace of form and richness of fragrance. Much more so is it with Conscience, and the Christian who cultivates it continually will be astounded at the progress it will make in spiritual growth and spiritual loveliness. We have now arrived at a very interesting stage in the development of Conscience. A good Conscience is *good*, but a *pure* Conscience is much *better*. The Conscience may be good without being pure; but it cannot be pure without *first* being good. Purity is a decided advance upon goodness.

Why are we so much afraid of that word pure? Can it be that we have become so habituated to impurity that purity shocks us? There was a time when to be called a Puritan was to be highly honoured. Was not the foundation of these great American States built upon Puritan blood and character? Britain, alas! now looks with contemptuous scorn upon the Puritan period! In this comparatively impure age, if you wish to insult a man you cannot do better than throw the epithet Puritan at him. Purity of Conscience is indeed a prize to be strenuously struggled for in these degenerate days. A rapid survey of the Beatitudes in Matt. v. will assist us to apprehend and appreciate the value of personal purity.

There Christ describes every mood and disposition of the human heart, and to every separate and successive mood He attaches its own particular recompense.

1. The *poor in spirit* have the *kingdom of heaven*, v. 3.
2. The *mourner* shall be *comforted*, v. 4.
3. The *meek* shall *inherit the earth*, v. 5.
4. The *hungry* after righteousness shall be *filled*, v. 6.
5. The *merciful* shall *obtain mercy*, v. 7.
6. The *peace-makers* shall be called *God's children*, v. 9.
7. The *persecuted* shall be rewarded in *heaven*, v. 12.
8. The *pure in heart* shall *see God*, v. 8.

This is the highest compensation which God has to offer. A *pure God* reserves a sight of his *pure person* to such as are *pure in heart*. Truly purity has the promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come. It will cost us an earnest effort to *attain* to and to *maintain* a pure Conscience.

"O Bliss of the Purified, bliss of the free,
I'm washed in that crimson tide opened for me!
In *Conscious* salvation I sing of His grace
Who lifts now upon me the smile of his face."

A WITNESSING CONSCIENCE

Romans ix. 1

When this phase of Conscience is properly comprehended and appreciated, it will be admitted to be a distinct advance on any phase of Conscience yet considered. The apostle is expressing his anxiety for " his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh." He speaks of the " great heaviness and continual sorrow of his heart " on their behalf. Then to show that this was no mere hypocritical display, he affirms that his Conscience bears him witness in the Holy Spirit. The more we ponder this unique expression the more our astonishment increases. This man of God invites the Eternal Spirit as a Witness to his veracity. This witnessing mentioned here must not be confounded with that other phase of witnessing alluded to in Romans viii. 16. Great confusion will inevitably arise if we do not rightly divide the truth here. There it is the " Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This is the witness of relationship; the testimony of Sonship. This witness every genuine Christian possesses in greater or lesser degree; but the witness of Romans ix. 1 is a vastly different thing, and a much richer Christian experience.

There are at least three distinct forms of witnessing referred to in the Epistle to the Romans:

1. The witness of Conscience to Law (Romans ii. 15).

2. The witness of the Spirit to the Christain (Romans viii. 16).

3. The witness of Conscience to truthfulness (Romans ix. 1).

The apostle avows here his absolute sincerity. "I lie not." All Christians cannot affirm this with equal confidence. Christians sometimes tell lies. They ought not to do so, but they do. It was to a Christian Church that the same apostle wrote and exhorted them "To put away lying" (Eph. iv. 25). And to the Christians at Colosse he further wrote: "Lie not to one another" (Col. iii. 9). *Converted* persons ofttimes do some very *unconverted*-looking things. *Saved* people are guilty of committing some very *unsaved*-looking deeds. Absolute truthfulness in every particular should characterize every Christian, and we should always be able to say in every circumstance, "My Conscience also bearing me witness." Especially must we ever be on our guard against *half-truths*. It was a half-truth that nearly ruined Sarah and destroyed Abraham (Gen. xii. 13). One of our own poets has expressed this weighty truth for us in such terse language that we cannot refrain from quoting it here:

"A lie that is *half a truth* is ever the *blackest* of lies:
A *lie* that is *all a lie* may be met and fought outright;
But a lie that is half a truth is a harder matter to fight."

Moreover, "lying lips" are still "an abomination to the Lord."

A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE

Acts xxiv. 16

This is the spiritual Alps of conscious blessedness. Thus far, and no farther, may man go in the ascending scale of Conscience. Thus high, but no higher, may he hope to rise as long as he is subjected to the limitations imposed by the flesh. This phase of Conscience was announced by Paul in the presence of Felix (Acts xxiv. 16). But he also confesses that it cost him a considerable amount of exercise before he arrived at this sacred summit. Not only did it cost him much exercise to arrive there, but it called for continual exercise to remain there. He also speaks of possessing this assurance of no offence toward God in heaven. This humble man could look up into the face of God and say calmly and truthfully, "I know nothing against myself" (1 Cor. iv. 4), but he was careful to add immediately, "Yet I am not hereby justified." Would to God that all so-called "holiness people" would breathe his spirit and adopt his language! Then looking around upon mankind he could maintain the same testimony. Robert Cleaver Chapman designated this aspect of Christian attainment as "A heavenly Conscience." But no Christian will arrive here without a terrible struggle. One eminent British statesman once said that "The price of peace is eternal vigilance." And if that be true of national peace, may we not say that the cost of a Conscience void of offence is eternal vigilance. There are four rules

to be observed if we would attain to this spiritual altitude and remain there :

1. Never do anything that you are in *doubt* about (Rom. xiv. 23).
2. Never do what you *know* to be *wrong* (Col. iii. 25).
3. Do everything you know to be *right* (Eph. vi. 1).
4. *Put* right everything you have done wrong, as far as it is in your power to do so (Luke xix. 8).

The Christian poulterer will not be able to palm off a tough, ten-year-old rooster as a spring chicken and maintain a Conscience void of offence. This holy state will strike a death blow at all commercial trickery and every form of political jugglery. The milliner's bill will be scrupulously discharged. The gas collector will not be told that mother is not in at present, while mother is in all the time ! The minister will not palm off an old discourse under a new title to prevent his preparing a new sermon. If your child is over age, you will not try to deceive the trolley-car conductor about him. A Conscience void of offence would revolutionize our private, social, political, commercial and ecclesiastical conditions.

> What Conscience dictates to be done,
> Or warns me not to do ;
> *This* teaches me more than Hell to shun,
> *That* more than Heav'n pursue.
>
> POPE—*Universal Prayer.*

AN EMBOLDENED CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians viii. 10

It is with considerable diffidence we now approach this solemn phase of Conscience. The task is anything but agreeable, but necessity compels us to proceed. We have already traced the debauchery of Conscience in the natural man, but in an emboldened Conscience we have the first step of degeneracy in the experience of a Christian. The words " know " and " knowledge " are key-words in this chapter. Eleven times over these words are used in different forms. It may not be out of place to introduce here a remarkable Arab proverb on the subject of knowledge :

1. He that *knows not* and *knows not* that he *knows not*;
   He is a fool—shun him.
2. He that *knows not* and *knows* that he *knows not* ;
   He is simple—teach him.
3. He that *knows* and *knows not* that he *knows* ;
   He is asleep—wake him.
4. He that *knows* and *knows* that he *knows* ;
   He is a wise man—follow him.

So here it is a question of knowledge, but knowledge grossly *misused*. A case is instanced of a Christian with knowledge going to an idol temple and sitting down to meat there. A younger Christian sees the action of this elder one, and is thereby emboldened to attempt what he has not sufficient spiritual strength to accomplish. The result is that he falls into error. The great lesson to be learned here is that " None of us

liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself" (Romans xiv. 7). We must pause to consider how our actions will affect others. A chauffeur may be qualified to propel his automobile through the village street at a high rate of speed without danger to himself; but he finds himself arrested by an officer of the law before he leaves the village. In vain he pleads that he himself is quite unhurt; but he must be taught to regard the safety of others as well as his own. So is it in this matter of influence with us all. The present application of this matter is rather different from that to which our chapter refers. Happily, we are not now living in idolatrous surroundings, but the world is still with us. Christian young men see elderly Christians smoking, and they are emboldened to smoke also. Christian maidens learn that their elder sisters frequent questionable amusements, and they are emboldened to enter these dangerous places. We elders are terribly responsible to God for the way we behave in the presence of our younger friends. It was the *old* prophet who dwelt in Bethel that acccomplished the death of the *young* prophet. He lied to him, and caused him to be put to death. After his death he wept over him, but it was too late. Better to have wept over him before he slew him. Let us weep over our young people first, and we will not slaughter them afterward.

"*Trust that man in* nothing *who has not a* Conscience in *everything.*"

Robinson Crusoe thought he was "monarch of all he surveyed" until he discovered "a human footprint in the sand," and from that moment he never rested until he found the man Friday.

A WOUNDED CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians viii. 12

When Conscience once begins to degenerate, suffering must inevitably follow. Each sin is a knife, and every time we sin Conscience receives a severe stab. Sin may be illustrated by a double-bladed dagger. When a person has decided to commit sin he seizes the dagger. He raises it aloft to give impetus to the downward stroke. The dagger descends, and its keen blade is buried in the victim's breast. We sin *against* those we sin *with*. When two persons sin conjointly they stab each other. When one person sins alone he stabs himself. When older Christians, who ought to know better, do things which they ought not to do they deliberately wound the Consciences of their younger and less experienced brethren and sisters. In doing so they not only sin against their brethren but the apostle argues that they also *sin against Christ*. All good done to a Christian, Christ will recognize as good done to Him. All evil perpetrated on a Christian, Christ will reckon as evil done to Him. Paul never thought that when he persecuted the Christians he was *persecuting Christ*; nevertheless, Jesus said unto him: "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" (Acts ix. 4). As elders our *good* may be *evil* spoken of. A thing may be lawful enough for us, but if it is not expedient for others, then we should be prepared to waive it, rather than wound them (1 Cor. x. 23-24). If we could only see Christ in His members

it would alter our entire behaviour towards them. Every time I offend a member of Christ's mystical body I offer an affront, and commit an injury against the great Head of that body. The following simple story will illustrate this particular line of teaching :

A Christian gentleman, as he was returning to his comfortable home one cold winter's night, had occasion to pass a sentry-box where a Christian soldier was stationed on duty. Seeing the sentry had no overcoat, he divested himself of the one he wore and transferred it to the shivering man. In a vision of the night Christ personally appeared to the gentleman, with his overcoat on, and smiling approvingly upon him, said, "For as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 40). Thus we repeat, all evil done to a Christian is evil done to Christ, and all kindness shown to a Christian is kindness shown to Christ.

A WEAK CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians viii. 7

When the Conscience is frequently and deeply wounded, in what condition could we expect to find it but in one of extreme weakness? Even as the human body when wounded is considerably weakened thereby, so Conscience loses strength through the wrong-doing of others, as well as by its own folly. We are all familiar with the expression, "hæmorrhage of the lungs." There is such a thing as *hæmorrhage of the Conscience.* Every time Conscience is wounded, Conscience bleeds. It does not exude blood, since it is not a physical organ, but *virtue,* for virtue is the life-blood of Conscience. There are many Consciences to-day lying on the floor of human hearts, and they are slowly bleeding to death through wounds inflicted by careless hands. A weak Conscience sees and dreads evil where there is *none.* A person with a weak Conscience is so afraid of doing *evil* that he abstains even from doing *good.*

They stumbled because of the attitude of those from whom they had a right to expect better things. Elders ought to be *stepping-stones* upon which their younger friends could easily climb nearer to God. But alas! alas! we are more frequently *stumbling-stones* over which our young people fall and become sorely wounded.

" There are two stones we may not cast:
The stone of stumbling in our brother s way ;
The stone of censure at our brother's past ;
For we ourselves have grossly gone astray."

The High-priest in Israel was chosen because he could reasonably bear with them that were out of the way. He was exhorted to have " compassion on the ignorant, for that he himself was also compassed with infirmity " (Heb. v. 2). We do well to remember this. Somebody has truthfully said :—

" There is so much that is *good* in the *worst* of us ;
And so much that is *bad* in the *best* of us ;
That it does not become the best of us
To throw any stones at the rest of us."

A careful examination of our chapter will reveal the fact that the word " weak " is five times employed here. Sometimes it is applied to the Christian, and at other times to the Conscience. In fact, the two things are indivisible. If a man has a weak Conscience he is sure to be a weak man morally. If he is robust and vigorous morally he will be strong in Conscience, and able to resist temptations.

Stones

A *stone* I surely am ! but of what kind ?
Ah ! let this thought most deeply grip my mind,
For there are stones *and* stones, which, as you see,
Do neither in their size nor shape agree.

Am I a *living stone* ? Or am I dead ?
Have I been blasted from dark nature's bed ?
Or do I still within my rock-home lie ?
Unreached by God's great power—dead, and to die.

If saved—a *stepping-stone* I may become
To raise a brother from some sinful slum ;
And watch him rise to heights of moral worth,
And claim an honoured place, through grace, on earth.

Or I may be a heartless *stumbling-stone* !
O'er which my fellow falls and breaks a bone ;
And have him crippled for the rest of life,
Unfit to stand erect amid the strife.

Or, awful thought ! I may a *millstone* be,
And drown my brother deep in sin's dark sea ;
Then watch the bubbles rise, which indicate
How absolutely hopeless was his fate.

Or, I may be a *grindstone* hard and round,
Upon whose wheel some fellow may be ground ;
A lord of sweated labour—what reck I
Should fellow-beings near me sink and die.

Yea, I may even be a *rolling stone*
And to a life of wandering be prone ;
But all such stones are useless as a whole,
They simply oscillate from pole to pole.

Not only are we *stones* ; but stones we *cast*—
The *stone of judgment* at a brother's past ;
Ye who are *sinless*—only ye alone
Possess the right to cast the JUDGMENT STONE.

A SWERVING CONSCIENCE

1 Timothy i. 6.

HERE we have a *pure* heart in close association with a *good* Conscience (1 Tim. i. 5-6); while in Heb. x. 22, it is a *true* heart associated with an *evil* Conscience. These contrasts are not accidental but deeply-designed and clearly-defined spiritual differences.

The word " swerved " in our day and language, means to turn aside sharply and unexpectedly. The marginal reading gives as an alternative rendering, " not aiming at," " have turned aside to vain jangling." The most impressive way to illustrate this swift action is to introduce the thought of a " jibing horse."

The animal is cantering steadily along a lovely country road and his rider is enjoying both the breeze and the scenery. Suddenly the wind raises a large piece of white paper, and the horse shies and jumps quickly to one side, leaving its rider lying stunned on the roadside. Well, now, Conscience can side-shy an important issue just as unexpectedly and mysteriously as the horse sidetracked its rider. In fact, to be true to the spirit of our text, it is not so much Conscience which swerves, but the owner of the Conscience who swerves from the path of plain, unescapable duty.

This sudden deflection from an obedient life springs from an unholy desire to be teaching others, while the person does not himself under-

stand what he says, nor whereof he affirms. We must read the whole context in one sentence if we would apprehend its full and deep significance. The age in which we live has much to do with the turning aside of many from the way of truth.

There are three features peculiar to our day :—

1. It is an age of fusion.
2. It is an age of *con*fusion.
3. It is an age of *de*lusion.

A SEARED CONSCIENCE

1 Timothy iv. 2

THE descent of Conscience in a Christian may have a very insignificant beginning, but it must inevitably lead to an inglorious end. Where doubtful things are persistently encouraged, and perverse deeds are regularly committed, Conscience must of necessity be injured thereby. The word *cauterize* better conveys the thought suggested. Notice here, too, the use of the expression "A hot iron." Under the heading "A Wounded Conscience," we have already referred to sin as a sharp knife. Here sin is a hot iron, and those who play with it must expect to be scorched thereby. Human skin frequently cauterized becomes thick, tough and leathery, and is rendered insensible to pain. Every time we sin it is like passing a hot iron across the surface of Conscience.

One of the most moving passages in Father Damien's "Life and Work in Leperland" is that in which he describes how one day he spilt some boiling water on his foot, and to his horror felt no pain. The good Father knew that if we feel no pain when we ought to do so, it is because we are dead already, and by this means he learned that he was leprous and marked for death.

But the question may arise in some mind as to whether this awful condition refers to a Christian at all. Well, the first verse of our chapter tells us that "Some shall depart from the faith," and they

could never *depart* from where they had *never* been. There is a threefold use of the word depart in the Epistles to Timothy :—

1. *All* Christians should depart from *iniquity* (2 Tim. ii. 19).

2. *Some* Christians depart from the *faith* (1 Tim. iv. 2).

3. *Paul* departs to be with *Christ* (2 Tim. iv. 6).

" Past feeling " is another expression employed in Holy Scripture to describe this blighted state of Conscience. When men once get here nothing ever touches them. They come and go to religious meetings, and hear the most searching ministry ; but it leaves them quite unmoved. The most solemn threatenings find them unawakened and unrepentant. Conscience in its natural state is soft and impressionable, but long continuance in evil hardens its constitution. In the material universe the same sun which softens the wax hardens the clay ; yet no man can blame the sun because it is so. The fault must be discovered in the difference of the disposition of the materials. It is the *nature* of the wax to soften under the influence of the sun's rays. It is the *nature* of the clay to harden under the same influence ; and so with Conscience.

At the beginning of its course it is soft, tender and pliable, but under the influence of sin it hardens until it reaches the state we have here described.

The Blacksmith's Dog.

Only a few days ago I had occasion to go into a blacksmith's shop on business. The blacksmith

and his man were plying their hammers on a piece of red-hot metal, while sparks and bits of burning iron were flying in all directions, amid deafening noise. To my astonishment I saw, lying near the anvil, a pretty dog soundly asleep. I asked the humorous blacksmith how it was that the dog could sleep in such a noise, and remain unmoved amid such danger. He said, "O, I suppose he is used to it. When I got him first, he was afraid to venture inside the smithy door, but as time wore on, he gradually got used to the sound, and less frightened at the sparks, and now, there he lies, soundly asleep as fearless of danger as if he lay in a palace."

"Just like many a sinner, blacksmith," I said. "There is a time in most people's history when the terrors of the law, and the fear of wrath to come, disturbs them, but by and by, like your dog, they get used to it, and after a while they can sleep within hearing of the terrors of hell, and remain indifferent to the most solemn warning of God's Word."

"Too true," said the blacksmith, and glancing at his sleeping dog, shook his head, and resumed his work. Take care you do not become hardened to the voice of God, reader. If you go on neglecting the Gospel, you will. What an awakening it must be to the Christless sinner, to find himself at the gates of hell, past mercy, beyond salvation, in the hands of Justice, a brand ready for the fire.

AN ABANDONED CONSCIENCE

1 Timothy i. 19

Now we have reached our deepest depth in the degeneracy of Christian Conscience. Its apostacy from God is now complete. The apostle here urges his son Timothy to "hold faith" in conjunction with "a good Conscience," and he immediately afterward adds, "Which some having put away." They never would *put away* what they *never* had. That is axiomatic. They are further stated to have made shipwreck. No man can suffer shipwreck if he is not *in* the ship. A man can never be shipwrecked if he never puts out to sea. The names of two individuals are inserted here as illustrations of those who have been guilty of this tremendous sin. The word "faith" is twice referred to in our verse, but its meaning is not the same in each instance. The Revised Version reads "Holding *faith* and a good Conscience, which some having thrust from them make shipwreck concerning *the faith.*" It is most important that we carefully discriminate and differentiate between *faith as trust* and *the faith as truth. Faith* is *trustfulness*; *the* faith is *truthfulness.* As soon as a person commences to question the faith, *i.e.* the truth, he will soon begin to give over faith, *i.e.* the trust. And conversely, when a person is tempted to put away *faith in God,* he will speedily give up the *truth of God.* No faith in God leads to no faith in truth; and no faith in truth leads to no faith in God. The whole thing may be summed up thus. Conscience in the

breast protests against its owner doing certain things and going to certain places. The person persists in going; and Conscience persists in resisting. They reach a deadlock. The owner of Conscience at last speaks out and says plainly, "I am determined to continue this course upon which I have entered. If you care to stifle your convictions and accompany me, good and well; but if not—farewell."

I said good-by to my Conscience,
Good-by foraye and aye;
And I pushed her hands off harshly
And turned my face away.
And Conscience, sorely wounded,
Returned not from that day.

But the time came when my spirit
Grew weary of its pace;
And I said "Come back" to Conscience,
"For I long to see thy face."
But Conscience said, "I cannot,
Remorse is in my place."

PAUL LAWRENCE DUNBAR.
(*A coloured poet.*)

THE OLD STORY

"To-morrow," he promised his Conscience; "To-morrow I mean to believe;
To-morrow I'll think as I ought to; to-morrow my Saviour receive;
To-morrow I'll conquer the habits that hold me from heaven away."
But ever his Conscience repeated one word, and one only: "To-day."
To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow—thus day after day it went on;
To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow—till youth like a vision was gone;
Till age and his passions had written the message of fate on his brow;
And forth from the shadows came Death, with the pitiless syllable "Now!"

Doubt: Honest and Dishonest

"There is more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."
So penned a Poet (witless lout)
To praise the doubter's doubtless deeds.

But let me whisper in your ear,
There's no such thing as *honest* doubt;
For doubt will doubtless disappear
If it be honest out and out.

For doubt is very much like gout,
The more 'tis nursed the more it grows;
When fed on Atheistic stout
It juggles, wriggles, cavils, crows.

Much of the doubt before our eyes
Is most dishonest in its heart;
It poses under honest guise
And shoots with skill its subtle dart.

Its shafts have entered hall and hut,
And into churches not a few;
The preacher cracks the doubtful nut,
And spreads the poison to the pew.

'Tis now thought doubtful *not* to doubt;
Yea, we are taught to *doubt* our doubts
All certainty is put to rout,
And no one knows its whereabouts.

Is there no knowledge to be had?
Has God not spoken once for all?
Indeed He has; all doubt is mad,
And destined to disastrous fall.

For God is God, and truth is true,
All doubt is sinful in His sight;
And doubters will have cause to rue
Their doubts through Hell's undoubted night.

ANECDOTES ON CONSCIENCE

An old Covenanter on being invited to accept Episcopacy and thus avoid persecution replied, "I would gladly enter the Episcopal Church, but my Conscience would not permit me." His friend rejoined, "Oh, never mind that, many to-day are making *great gashes* in their Consciences and could not you make a *wee nick* in yours."

"I have plenty of Conscience," said one man to another. "Yes," replied his friend, "and it is as *good as new*, for I never knew you to exercise it since I have known you."

A Hindu once said to a British Administrator in India, "Our Consciences tell us to burn our widows in the funeral pyre;" and the officer retorted, "And our Consciences tell us to *hang* you if you do so."

President Wilson tells an impressive incident of D. L. Moody's influence for good. "I was sitting in the chair of a hairdresser's establishment one morning in Chicago having my hair trimmed. The door swung widely open and a thick-set man hustled into the room. Prior to this all was chatter and clatter. The barbers were discussing their gains and losses on the race-course. When Moody entered, absolute quiet and calm prevailed. After Moody had gone out, I ventured to ask the man that was attending to me who that was who had such wide influence over his fellows. My attendant answered, "Why, sir, don't you know D. L. Moody?"

Profanity has often ceased in the barrack-room when a Christian officer has entered, and also in the mess-room of a battleship when a godly sailor appeared. This is how a Christain proves himself to be " the salt of the earth."

No Bargain

" All this power will I give thee . . . if " (Luke iv. 6. 7). A Public Utilities Company, seeking a franchise in a large city, sent an unscrupulous representative to interview a city official whose vote was sorely needed. When the official intimated that his vote was not for sale, the representative exclaimed : " Think of the money, man ! It's the bargain of a lifetime. You'll never have another chance to make as much so easily." " So easily ! " replied the official. " Listen, friend ! No one ever yet got a bargain in sin. It's the highest-priced thing in the market. You tell me that all I have to do is to vote ' right.' Well, it isn't. That's only the beginning of what I'll have to do. I'll have to carry the consciousness of my dishonesty to the grave. I'll have to live with a remorseful Conscience. I'll have to pose before my wife and children as some one I know I am not. Don't tell me it's a bargain."

CONSCIENCE IN EPIGRAM

1. The sound sense of the soul.
2. Conscience will shorten the great assize.
3. Conscience is the inalienable possession of balanced human nature.
4. The link which binds mortal man to the Immortal God.
5. No man can have a *good day* with a *bad Conscience.*
6. Keep the Conscience *tender* and it will check the first approach of sin.
7. A very *slight stain* on the Conscience will make a *wide breach* in communion.
8. When Conscience holds and yields the whip, a guilty man will pray.
9. It was better for Joseph to lose a *good coat* than a *good Conscience.*
10. Labour to keep alive in your bosom that little spark of celestial fire.
11. The torture of a bad Conscience approaches hell in a living soul.
12. A guilty Conscience is like a *whirlpool*; it draws everything to itself.
13. Even in *favours,* a guilty Conscience makes a *guilty* man *suspicious.*
14. Sin impairs the vision, hardens the heart, atrophies the Conscience.
15. A *healthy* Conscience always turns to the *right* hand, a *sickly* one to the *left.*
16. The truth of Conscience no *sophistry* of earth will ever *wrest* from common man.

17. The *last* thing left to man after he had squandered all else that God hath given.

18. Conscience, that still small voice which all the voluptuous swellings of earth can never down nor drown.

19. A *good* Conscience is to the *soul* what *health* is to the *body*, and a bad Conscience is to the soul what disease is to the body.

20. Suspicion always haunts a guilty Conscience; the thief doth fear each hush to be an officer.

21. Some men do with Conscience what David did with Uriah; make it *drunk* to get rid of it.

22. Conscience compelled David to cry out, "My sin is ever before me." Wherever he turned by day or night, he saw the Ghost of Uriah.

23. Herod beheld the gore of the beheaded Baptist wherever he turned. When he heard of Christ, he said, "This is *John* whom I have *beheaded*."

24. Had Conscience *strength* equal to its *knowledge*, and *power* commensurate with its *authority*, it would lay mankind helpless at its feet.

25. Conscience itself is one of the sleepiest of all things, and unless God awakens it, it would never waken itself nor awaken us.

26. Conscience itself requires a *Conscience* to regulate it, for nothing can be less *conscientious* than a *conscientious* Conscience.

27. Conscience is a very complex organism in man which, when healthy, always manifests a sturdy determination toward right.

28. A flag of defiance which an innocent person may always flaunt in the face of every false imputation and slander.

29. Conscience is the surest prognosticator of God's last judgment and the best almanack to foretell his doom on that day.

30. The test of every religious, political or educational system is the man it forms. If it injures the *intelligence* it is *bad*; if it injures the *character* it is *vicious*; if it impairs the *Conscience* it is *criminal.*

31. Conscience is like a clock encased in glass through which you can see all the works *within.*

32. Conscience is only *one* chord in the marvellous musical mechanism of man's multiplex constitution.

33. Conscience is a counter-fire within, that burns when we put our hands into the flames of sin.

34. Conscience, when exercised apart from God's Spirit and Word, may fitly be compared to sailors attempting to rectify their compasses while viewing the sun through a cloud.

The Chief Dangers

which confront the present century are :—

1. Religion without the Holy Ghost.
2. Christianity without Christ.
3. Forgiveness without Repentance.
4. Salvation without Regeneration.
5. Politics without God.
6. Heaven without Hell.
7. Conscience without Exercise.

CONSCIENCE IN PARAGRAPH

MANY passages of Scripture designed to act upon the *Conscience* of a *servant* have been used to *alarm* the *heart* of a *child*, and what has only a reference to *responsibility* is brought to bear upon *relationship*.

Conscience in mankind may be compared to chain-stitch in a sewing machine. You have only to sever *one* stitch and the entire seam unravels immediately.

Conscience in man continues *probing* until it reaches the very *bottom* of his sin. Joseph, between *rough speaking* and *kind actions*, laid his broken-hearted brethren low at his feet in penitence. It sometimes requires *months* of probing to discover the sin of a *moment*.

Conscience requires continued rectification by the Word of God, otherwise it becomes *erratic* in its movements, and *chaotic* in its conclusions. The most delicate mathematical instruments require occasional adjustment; and even our chronometers must be regulated by the sun.

Conscience, taught by *Holy Scripture* and quickened by the *Holy Spirit*, becomes a reliable guide through the maze of intermingled good and evil in this present world.

Conscience as a witness speaks with *three* voices:—

1. It *warns* lest a man should do what he *thinks* is wrong.

2. Then it *rebukes* when a man has done what he *knows* to be wrong.

3. It *approves* when a man has done what he regards as *right.*

Conscience, according to Scripture, is the faculty that makes us brave when we do right, or cowardly and fearful when we do wrong. Over right actions it breathes its benediction of approval; over wrong actions it breathes nothing but the bitterest of feelings. Conscience sits on the *bench* of the soul as God's vice-regent, *absolving* or *condemning* as it finds the sincerity or hypocrisy of the heart on its trial. Self-judgment is the proper office of Conscience, and to enable it to fulfil its functions there are three things necessary:—

1. A knowledge of the *rule* or *law* by which it is to judge. Without this Conscience can no more accomplish its work than can a mechanic without tools.

2. A knowledge of the *facts* to be judged.

3. The *ability* to pass judgment on ourselves or others according to the *law* of God.

Conscience does not exist in the *same degree* in everyone, nor is it *equally strong* at all times in the *same* individual. It is, therefore, constantly capable of receiving a keener and a more cutting edge. Conscience reaches its *highest height* when it arrives at its *healthiest* state.

No man knows what Conscience is until he understands what *solitude* has to teach him concerning it. Conscience is that faculty in man which perceives rightness and oughtness in moral motives, and approves or disapproves according to their rightness or oughtness or otherwise.

There are phosphoric match-boxes made which can be seen in the dark, but it is said that they lose their gleam if they are not put into the sunlight. But, if so refreshed, they will glow well in the dark. So do *pit ponies* lose their sight if they

are kept too long in the dark. Thus it is with Conscience, if not constantly brought under the light of God's Word.

You need not break the glasses of your telescope, nor coat them over with paint to prevent you from seeing through them. Just *breathe* on them and the condensed vapour of your breath will *shut* out the stars. *Great* sins are not necessary to *blunt* the edge or *blind* the eye of Conscience. *Small* sins give *tall* results.

Scales are now made which are sensitive to the ten thousandth part of a gram or the thousandth part of a grain. The *average* balances in *every* day use are not *capable* of these *fine* adjustments. To weigh *one* hair of the head would be an *impossibility* with them. The Conscience in man may be likened to a balance. In *unregenerate* natures it can make, successfully, the *larger* discriminations, but, when *quickened* and made spiritually sensitive, it is *capable* of much *greater* refinement, and deals with the more *delicate* matters of motive and principle.

Conscience is to man what a needle is to a compass. The navigating officer may not follow its indications, but there is in the needle a *power* which compels it to point to the north when it is balanced on a hair point and allowed to move unfettered. *Iron* vessels deflect *compasses*; and iron hearts deflect the conscience.

1. *A blind Conscience sees nothing.*
2. *A deaf Conscience hears nothing.*
3. *A dumb Conscience says nothing.*
4. *A thick Conscience feels nothing.*
5. *A lazy Conscience does nothing.*
6. *A confused Conscience understands nothing.*
7. *A disorganized Conscience arranges nothing.*
8. *A juggling Conscience sticks at nothing.*

An Oil-Cloth Conscience

By this we mean that kind of Conscience that slops everything over, and can be mopped up in the twinkling of the eye with very little trouble to the person who has spilled the platter. *A Linen Conscience* is that phase of Conscience which, having contracted the stain, requires a *process* of cleansing ere the mark can be erased.

The barbarous people of Melita seemed to have a Conscience about the coming day of retribution for sin. When they saw the serpent on Paul's hand they concluded he was a murderer, whom although he had escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffered not to live (Acts xxviii).

CONSCIENCE AND ATHEISM

NATURAL thought is a conceived and cradled atheist. An atheist is usually a conceited coxcomb. He has so much *faith in himself* that he has none left to place *in God*, and *none to spare* to offer to his fellow-men. "I verily *thought* with myself I *ought* to do many things *contrary* to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. *Which thing I also did*" (Acts xxvi. 9-10). Such was the Apostle Paul's mere natural thought about our Lord Jesus Christ, and he put those natural thoughts of his into strenuous muscular action.

There are three important features in this chapter which challenge and compel our attention:—

1. *The natural thought*, v. 9.
2. *The heavenly vision*, v. 19.
3. *The continuing force*, v. 22.

The *heavenly vision* destroyed the *natural thought*, and the *continuing force* sustained the *heavenly vision*.

Atheism aims its most thundering blows at the utter annihilation of Conscience. The infamous "manifesto" of Karl Marx, issued as far back as 1847, proves what we assert as to the destruction of Conscience. Its cardinal principles are four, and they are bluntly and blatantly stated as follows:—

1. *We must get rid of the abomination of God.*
2. *We must get rid of the superstition of religion.*

3. *We must get rid of that senseless thing called Conscience.*

4. *We must get rid of the insanity of immortality.*

Let no man be deceived as to the iconoclastic intentions and tendencies of the atheist. If atheism had its reckless and ruthless way, this fair land of ours would be robbed of :—"*Every virtue we possess*" and also of "*every conquest won,*" and "*every thought of holiness*" would be bedraggled in the foul slough of a Godless, Religionless, Conscienceless and Hopeless infidelity.

A most sacrilegious poster was placarded on the hoardings of Soviet Russia a few years ago, which for daring effrontery would be difficult to exceed. Portrayed in the firmament were figures to represent God, Christ and The Holy Spirit, and Confucius, Buddha and Mohammed. Standing on a high ladder, with an immense hammer in his hand, was a Soviet workman. Brandishing his hammer frantically, he shouts : "*We have destroyed the gods of earth, now for the gods of heaven.*" Let us make no mistake as to the malicious and mischievous purposes of atheism. We cannot do better than conclude this chapter with the record of an interview Bishop Whipple once had with a man of strong infidel tendencies. This gentleman affirmed that he would be an atheist but for three things :—

1. *I am a man.*—I came from *somewhere* and I am *going* somewhere. I am *nearer* the end of life's journey *to-day* than I was *yesterday.*

2. *I had a mother.*—I saw her die, and she went down as calmly into the dark valley of the shadow as a child at rest on a mother's breast. I know that that was no dream.

3. *I have three daughters.*—I am their only human protection, and I would rather slay them

with my own hand than leave them behind me in this sordid world if you blot out of it the teachings of the Bible.

Let Christians and atheists alike ponder these solemn words.

A CHAPTER ON SELF-EXAMINATION

We cannot do better than conclude this solemn treatise on Conscience than by urging the reader to undertake the obligation of a searching examination. The four living creatures in the Book of Revelation are fitted with *three* sets of eyes :—

1. *Eyes before. Prospective vision.*
2. *Eyes behind. Retrospective vision.*
3. *Eyes within. Introspective vision.*

(Rev. iv. 6–8.)

All three aspects of vision are utilised by the Christian in the Lord's Supper as recorded in 1 Cor. xi.

1. Eyes *behind* look back to the Lord's death, v. 26.

2. Eyes *before* look forward to His coming, v. 26.

3. Eyes *within* tell of heart examination, v. 28.

Self-examination is a most healthy exercise. We have no mandate from God for the examination of *others*. "Let a man examine *himself*" (1 Cor. xi. 28). In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, we have one of the most solemn exhortations on the subject of self-examination to be found within the entire compass of Holy Scripture.

1. "EXAMINE *yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.*"

2. "PROVE *your own selves.*"

3. "KNOW *ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates.*"

Ourselves are *three* times emphasized in this one, terse verse (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

If I do not *examine* myself I can never *know* myself, and if I do not *examine* and *know* myself, how can I ever *prove* myself ?

Daily self-examination will keep the Conscience tender. How easily we get used to being something poorer than we ought to be, or need be, by letting things pass without inward and searching scrutiny ! The moral sense is deadened until it cannot feel the blister of evil. To prevent this hardening of the moral touch, nothing is so effective as self-examination. It makes our repentance real. How indefinite are most of our confessions of sin ! To examine ourselves means that we shall very definitely name and feel the shame of our particular failures and failings. In fine, not to search ourselves with the lamp of truth and the light of God's Spirit is to keep the shutters on the windows of the soul. In the darkness within, anything may go on ; and in any case the soul could not be right with God. We must take stock of ourselves if life is to be good and joyous and strong.

God's X-Rays

Come, my poor soul, prepare thyself for searching !
Thy God doth bring His light to bear on thee ;
Why wilt thou on pedestal high be perching,
While He thy heartless hollowness can see ?

What place hast thou assigned to Christ within thee ?
Dost thou restrict Him to a narrow part ?
Or does a rival seek from Him to win thee,
And share with Him the empire of thy heart ?

Dost thou love any pleasure more than praying ?
Is it to thee the holiest of all things ?
Hast thou found prayer God's grace to thee conveying ?
Is thy soul most at home on praying wings ?

Does any book appear to thee more worthy
Than the blest Word sent down from God above ?
Can any book of earth make thee more sturdy,
Or fill thy heart with ecstacy of love ?

Is there upon the face of fair creation
A place more sacred than the " House of God " ?
Does yet thy heart beat high with expectation
When thou art present in His blest abode ?

Is the Lord's Table to thee all it once was ?
Or is the bread esteemed by thee as " light " ?
Canst thou forsake the royal feast without cause ?
Dost thou forget the dark betrayal night ?

Should'st thou be thus—I pray thee be alarmed ;
'Tis time for thee to pause and search thy ways :
If thou by this false world art being charmed,
From Christ thy Lord thou shalt receive scant praise.

Evolution

Is there no Living God ?
Then is there life in me ?
If God be not, then I am not,
Nor could I ever be.

For life must needs proceed
From some primeval cause ;
No self-creating thing is known
In all vast nature's laws.

But " Science," falsely called,
Dares to dictate to God ;
It contradicts His Holy Word,
While atheists applaud.

It says man was a beast ;
And that he slowly rose
By lazy stages, till at last
He came as man to pose.

If men evolved from beasts,
Will scientists explain
How man has lived so long as man
And still doth man remain ?

When did the process cease ?
And why evolve no more ?
Surely a further change must come
If change did come before.

'Tis true a grub may grow
And change its outer form ;
From chrysalis to butterfly,
No more to live as worm.

But man was not made so,
Nor can he change his state ;
As man he was, and man will be
To time's remotest date.

For God did man create
By special word and deed ;
Let not earth's vain philosophy
God's record supersede.

Let evolution go—
A HUMAN theory—
Hold fast God's faithful word and know
By faith Life's Mystery.

The Church Beautiful
(A Model Church)

How beautiful that Church must be
Where *Watchful* is the Porter
While *Prudence* has the oversight
And *Patience* the exhorter.
Where *Harmony* conducts the praise,
And *Reverence* the *Worship* ;
While *Loyalty* ascribes to Christ
The undisputed *Lordship*.

Humility pervades the place,
And *Piety* sweet smileth ;
While *Purity* her fragrance breathes,
And *Gentleness* beguileth.
Simplicity adorns the walls,
And *Grace* all captivating—
Benevolence is prominent,
While *Zeal* is operating.

Here *Mercy* wears her diadem
And *Meekness* conquers friction ;
While *Truth* exerts its influence—
Joy adds her benediction.
Here *Righteousness* is placed on guard,
And *Faith* is ever active ;
While *Goodness* evermore abounds,
And *Christ* is all attractive.

O *Lord* restore thy Church to this
Her primitive position ;
And let us taste on Earth the bliss
Of this divine condition.

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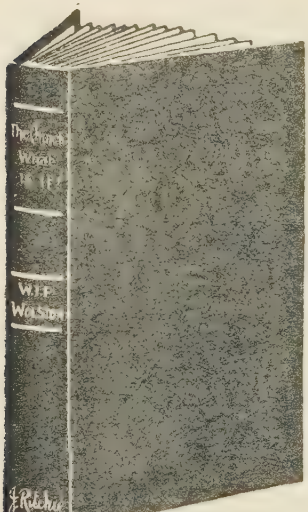

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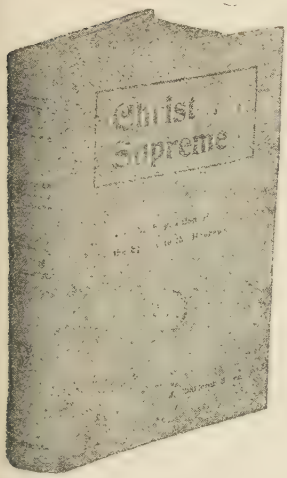

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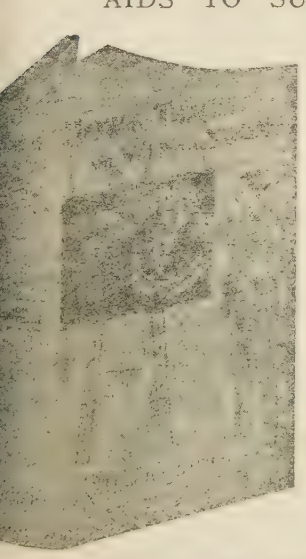

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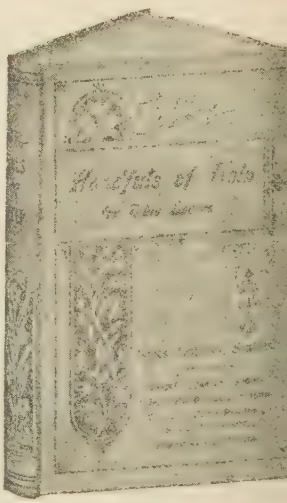

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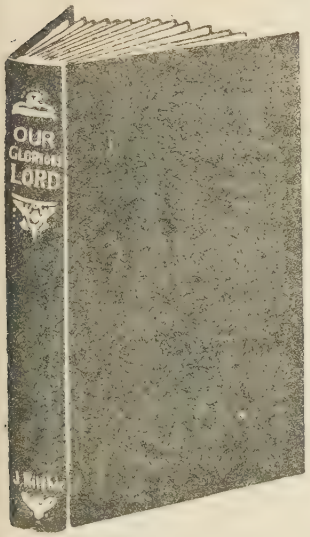

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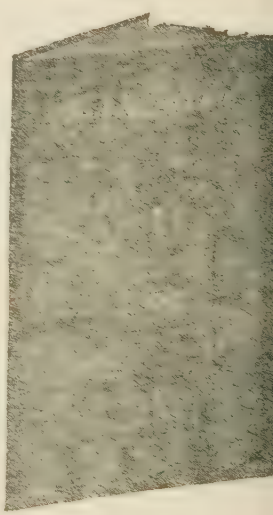

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